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## ABSTRACT

A study examined how much of the news being presented by other developed nations' network television news programs involved the United States in comparison to those stories involving other developed and developing nations. It was expected that if the American dominance existed in other developed nations' media, the New World Information Order's "imperialism hypothesis" would not explain the United States' dominance of world news flow, but rather the simple economic and political dominance of the United States in world affairs, including those of developing nations, would better explain the "imbalance" in flow of world news. Video tapes and news script samples from two British and two Japanese television networks for 1 year were examined for mention of nations and story type. News stories mentioning the United States dominated the international news coverage on all the British and Japanese network samples, and the number of news stories mentioning the United States was greater than those mentioning all other nations, developed and developing. Both British and Japanese used foreign film reports, the most expensive production technique, to report on developing nations as frequently as or more often than to report on developed nations, including the United States. The results did not support the New World Information Order proponents' "imperialism hypothesis." (HTH)

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
COVERAGE BY THE BRITISH AND JAPANESE TV NETWORKS  
(NO. 2: SEPT. 1980 - AUG. 1981)

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## Introduction

This paper offers a new interpretation of a group of established hypotheses. This group is referred to as the New World Information Order hypothesis, and it analyzes the causes of imbalance found in the international flow of information between industrial nations and developing nations.

One fact which seems to be accepted among the proponents of the hypotheses and assumed by the researcher is that news stories about the United States dominate the news in the developing nations.

Some scholars and statesmen have asserted that the causes of this "imbalance" are the imperialistic practices of the United States government and its transnational media corporation. This researcher, however, believes that the causes of this "imbalance" are not imperialistic practices, but rather the simple economic and political dominance of the United States in world affairs--including those of the developing nations.

Both of the above beliefs may adequately explain the causes for the "imbalance." If the United States and its media corporations are guilty of imperialistic practices, and if an imbalance in the news in the developing nations is a necessary consequence of such imperialism, then the New World Information Order hypothesis would explain the situation. However, if the United States is the dominant economic and political force in the world and if an imbalance in the news of developing nations is a necessary consequence of such dominance, the researcher's hypothesis would explain the situation.

The problem, then, is clear: which explanation is preferable? In order to determine which is the preferred hypothesis, the researcher employs an empirical study which introduces new evidence regarding the international flow of news: the news stories about the United States dominate the news in the industrial nations.

There are two logical methods with which the new evidence can be used to determine the validity of the above hypotheses.

- (a) one hypothesis is less adequate than the other because the new empirical evidence contradicts a premise;
- (b) one hypothesis is less adequate than the other because the new empirical evidence proves to be inexplicable by one hypothesis and explicable by the other.

The researcher makes no use of the first method in this paper. By assuming that the premises of his own hypothesis are true, while at least one of the premises of the New World Information Order hypothesis is false, the researcher could attack the hypothesis. However, the researcher has no new evidence with which to confirm the premises of the New World Information Order hypothesis. Thus, no crucial contention can controvert the crucial contention of the New World Information Order hypothesis. No matter how much data were to be gathered in support of the researcher's premise--that is, the United States government and its multi-national media corporations do not engage in imperialistic practices to manipulate influential news flow--logic prohibits conclusive denial of the premise set by the New World Information Order hypothesis.

Rather, the researcher uses the second method to bring this paper to its conclusion. The argument developed herein is that the empirical evidence is inexplicable by the New World Information Order hypothesis but is explicable by the researcher's own hypothesis: the stories about the United States dominate the news even in the industrial nations wherein imperialistic practices of the United States cannot be the cause but its political and economic dominance may well be.

The conclusion of this paper, therefore, will be constructed in the following manner:

- (a) the researcher's hypothesis can explain the dominance of stories about the United States in the international coverage of industrial nation's media;
- (b) however, the New World Information Order hypothesis cannot explain the above dominance;
- (c) therefore, the researcher's hypothesis is the more powerful explanation of the dominance or the "imbalance."

In consequence, until the premises of the researcher's hypothesis are controverted by new empirical evidence than the New World Information Order hypothesis, the researcher's hypothesis remains the more powerful of the two explanations.

It should be noted that this research is not designed to "refute" the New World Information Order hypotheses. Rather, it is meant to suggest that more precise evaluation of scholarly evidence relating to international news flow may in time provide a foundation for hypotheses capable of supporting scholarly theorizing in this vital field of research.

Within the last several decades, a number of studies have been conducted concerning ownership and control of news agencies, imbalance in the flow of news, and distortion through news values. Thus, it is possible to delineate the significance of these arguments through a review of the literature.

In 1951, Kyser found that only three percent of American wire service coverage was devoted to Latin American affairs.<sup>4</sup> Ten years later, Hart reported that six major newspapers in Ohio devoted only 39.8 percent of their foreign coverage to the Third World while allocating 28.6 percent to West European affairs alone.<sup>5</sup> In 1971, Gerbner and Marvanyi surveyed a total of nine American newspapers and found that Latin American and North Africa received only 6.6 and 9.8 percent of their foreign coverage space, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Rosengren reported that in 1971, Swedish television devoted only 39.8 percent of its foreign news coverage to Third World Affairs.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the previous studies support the assertion of the proponents of the New World Information Order, such as the charge made by Mustapha Masmoudi, Tunisia's Secretary of State for Information: ". . . only 10% to 30% of the international news-flow relates to the Third World."<sup>8</sup>

Those empirical studies show, at least in a purely quantitative sense, that the news about the Third World constitutes only a small portion of the foreign news in the industrial nations.

On the other hand, some researchers have investigated the domination of First World news, especially of U.S. affairs, in the foreign news coverage of the Third World media. Gerbner and Marvanyi found that affairs of North America occupied 12.5 percent of foreign news coverage by the newspapers of Ghana, India and the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> After completing a content analysis of six Asian television network news programs, Gonzalez concluded that news about the United States occupied a significant portion of foreign news coverage across the networks. His data show that the American affairs occupied more than 20 percent--the highest figure for a single nation--of foreign news coverage in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, these studies also support the assumption that news about the industrial nations, particularly about the United States, dominate the international news coverage of the Third World.

The most powerful and widely accepted hypothesis, which attempts to explain the causes for the "imbalance," is based upon the economic and political imperialistic practices of the West. Many proponents of the New World Information Order believe that the Third World dependence on the Western news agencies, such as UPI and AP, is the cause of the "imbalance." Righter assessed the flow of news in the world, based largely on interviews with the proponents of the New World Information Order and on a review of

UNESCO sponsored conference proceedings, and summarized the proponents' views:

"The international news agencies. . .symbolize not only the imbalance in the flow of information, but the dominance in the economic, political, and technical spheres of the industrialized powers."<sup>3</sup>

By advocating a Marxist structure for the New Order, Schiller argued that:

". . .not only that the 'cultural take-over' of entire societies--planned by the US communications industry initially for profit--is now being coordinated 'at the highest governmental levels' as part of a cultural policy aimed at promoting the values and structures which assure American dominance."<sup>10</sup>

Some researchers have produced empirical test results which support the "imperialism" hypothesis. After an extensive survey on the content and origin of television programs aired on the world's television systems, Varis and Nordenstreng claimed that:

". . .world news coverage usually includes very little news from the Third World, a lack due to a great extent to the dominance of the Western news gathering and distribution business."<sup>11</sup>

Tunstall argued that the United States has written the international grammar of mass communication to further achieve the imperialistic practices. He asserted that audiences in all nations have been taught to expect television news to include an expensive commodity--foreign news film produced and marketed by the world news film agencies of the United States and Britain.<sup>12</sup>

In short, lack of analytical simplicity and empirical evidence can be found in the majority of these studies which have attempted to develop hypothesis explaining the causes of imbalance in the international news flow. Although the "imperialism" hypothesis has been dominant, it is difficult to determine the validity of this hypothesis for empirical evidence is limited.

The review of literature also suggests that television, despite its influential strength and popularity, has rarely been used in these empirical

studies, while the content of newspapers and wire service copies has been more widely investigated.

### Research Question

The general research question to be answered by the empirical study, therefore, is as follows: how much of the news being presented by other developed nations' network television news programs involves the United States in comparison to these news stories involving other developed and developing nations? If the American dominance exists within other developed nations' media, the "imperialism hypothesis" cannot explain the international flow of news. Since the imperialistic practices of the United States cannot be the cause of imbalance within the developed nations, an alternative explanation is necessary. Therefore, the researcher's explanation--the causes of the "imbalance" are not imperialistic practices of the United States, but rather the simple economic and political dominance of the United States in the world affairs, including those of the developing nations--may explain the cause of the "imbalance" in both the First World and the Third World nations.

### Methods

Video tape and news script samples from two British and two Japanese television networks over a period of twelve months (between September, 1980, and August, 1981) were obtained to conduct an empirical study. By utilizing content analysis, the difference between the four programs in terms of their story tapes and news themes of international coverage peculiar to their newscasts were distinguished.

The network evening news programs sampled were: JNN News Scope and NHK Newscenter 9 of Japan; and BBC 9 O'Clock News and ITN News at Ten of

the United Kingdom. The programs were selected because of their similarities in national viewership and format and because of their status as a "flagship" news program for each network surveyed.

The basic unit of analysis for the present study is the news story. Each story was searched for the following recording units: 1) Mention of Nations and 2) Story Type.

According to the UNESCO, there are over 130 independent nations in the world. Each news story sample was scanned for these nations and for two additional quasi-national names: Taiwan and PLO. Since many nations were often mentioned within a single story, all nations were coded regardless of the slug line which can identify the main actor among the nations.

Production style or "story type" of each story was classified into one of five categories. The categories were developed to quantify the degree of physical and financial attention provided by each network to the individual stories. In the following categorization, the extent of attention is rated in accordance with the degree of production complexity.

1. Studio Report (ST): A story read by an anchor person without any visual effects.
2. Studio Report with Graphics (STG): A story read by an anchor person accompanied by chroma-key or rear projections of photographs, graphics, and/or freeze frames of video tape or film.
3. Studio Report with Video Tape or Film (STV): A story read by an anchor person over video tapes and/or film.
4. Domestic Film Report (DFR): A filmed and/or video-taped story presented by field correspondents originating from domestic locations.
5. Foreign Film Report (FFR): Filmed and/or video-taped story presented by field correspondents originating from foreign locations.

Individual television news stories can be evaluated for their production quality by their production styles. For example, if one network uses the STG, DFR and FFR styles more often than the other networks in its

international coverage, one may assume that the network is spending a higher ration of personnel and monetary efforts to produce its international news. Therefore, these production styles can be used as units to cross analyze the extent of international news coverage provided by the sampled networks.

Random samples of about 33 percent of all the news stories in the data base for BBC Nine O'Clock News were used to determine reliability. Agreements between coders for the individual categories are as follows: Story Types - 98%; Mention of Nations = 93%.

These numbers indicate that the present research is based upon a significantly reliable data base.

### Findings

An examination of the following questions may generate the answers to the research question posed previously:

1. Do the news stories mentioning the United States appear more frequently than those mentioning other nations in the international news coverage provided by the sampled British and Japanese television news programs?
2. Do the news stories mentioning the United States receive more complex and expensive application of production than those mentioning other nations in the international news coverage provided by the sampled British and Japanese television news programs?

If the first question can be answered in the affirmative, one must take issue with the proponents of the New World Information Order who apparently assume that the domination of news stories mentioning the United States occurs only among the Third World media. Consequently, an affirmative answer to this question suggests the need for alternative interpretations of the domination of news stories mentioning the United States.

Table 1 shows quite clearly that the news stories mentioning the United States dominate the international news coverage on all the British and

Japanese network programs sampled. Furthermore, the number of news stories on these programs which mentions the United States is significantly more frequent than the number of news stories mentioning all of the other nations, developed and developing. It is apparent that it is not only the Third World media which are dominated by news stories about the United States.

The purpose of the second question is to determine if the news stories mentioning the United States receive more qualitative investments by the First World media than those mentioning the Third World nations.

If more complex and expensive production styles, such as Domestic Film Report and Foreign Film Report, are used for producing the news stories which mention other nations than those which mention the United States, the answer is negative. Table 2, 3, 4 and 5 are constructed to clarify the results of this analysis. By comparing the use of Foreign Film Report style on the developing nations' news stories, the answer is negative. All the Japanese and British networks utilize this production style to report on the developing nations more frequently than/or as frequently as to report on the developed nations, including the United States.

Furthermore, when the use of production styles on the news stories mentioning the developing nations is compared with more definite non-video (ST and STG) and video (STV, DFR and FFR) production clusters, the same trend is evident in all four network programs. Table 6 clearly shows this result. This finding is quite contrary to the claims seemingly made by the proponents of the New World Information Order. What they apparently perceive is that the Western media spends significantly less money and effort to report on the events in the developing nations than those in the developed nations. According to the statistics shown in these tables, however, these assumptions are debatable. The sampled network programs spend as much or more money and

effort to inform about the developing nations' news events than about news events in the developed nations.

In consequence, there is evidence to show the dominance of news about the United States within the First World media. This is contrary to the assumptions made by the proponents of the New World Information Order.

### Conclusion

As evidenced, the domination of news stories about the United States exists in the First World media's international news coverage. This phenomenon may be explained as the direct reflection of the dominant political position which the United States holds within the First World nations. In other words, if the United States is leading in First World politics, it is only natural and necessary for the First World media to pay more attention to the events relating to the United States than those relating to other nations.

If this explanation is justified, the domination of news stories about the United States and other developed nations in the Third World media can also be explained in the same manner. That is, since the political affairs of the United States and other developed nations are significantly important to many of the developing nations' national interests, it is natural and generally necessary for the Third World media to pay more attention to the events related to the First World nations than to those related to the Third World. Consequently, the domination of the Third World media by events occurring in the First World may not be the result of intentional manipulation and/or conspiracy on the part of the First World governments and media.

On the other hand, the "imperialism" hypothesis developed by the proponents of the New World Information Order is incapable of explaining this new

empirical evidence: the stories about the United States dominate the news even in the industrialized nations wherein imperialistic practices of the United States cannot be the cause, but American political and economic dominance may well be.

By comparing and contrasting the patterns of politics in the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom with the thematic patterns of the news stories about the United States reported by the Japanese and British media, the researcher will attempt to provide evidence to support the above "political and economic dominance" hypothesis.

The international political roles played by the United States are significantly more diverse and amplified than those played by Japan or the United Kingdom. For example, the strategic aspect alone clearly places the United States as the most powerful nation among the three. The United States not only has a significantly higher defense budget than the other two nations but it also aids the other nations' defense in many ways.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, of which the United Kingdom is a member, has always been heavily financed and organized by the United States. Despite the fact that there are fifteen nations in NATO, the United States supplies 10 percent of the ground forces, 20 percent of the naval forces, and 25 percent of the air forces in NATO Europe.<sup>13</sup> Under the Security Treaty with the United States, Japan is completely dependent on the aid of American defense forces for their strategic protection.<sup>14</sup> Thus, if an event relating to the non-combative military aspect of politics occurs, the United States is the most likely nation to be mentioned on the news stories provided by the British and Japanese media.

The above mentioned indicates that both Japan and the United Kingdom are likely to be keenly interested in the strategic activities of the United

States. Naturally, their media can be expected to pay relatively more attention to the political theme (which includes non-combative military affairs) in reports about the United States. Table 7 shows the thematic breakdown of the news stories mentioning the United States reported by the NHK News Center 9 and the BBC Nine O'Clock News. As predicted, the table shows heavy attention given to political news by both networks. Therefore, it is justified to assert that the First World media, represented by the BBC and NHK, pay much more attention to the American political affairs, whether or not the United States is involved in a highly significant international crisis.

The researcher finds no evidence of the intention on the part of the United States government or the American news agencies to promote these political stories about the United States on the Japanese and British television news programs. Furthermore, he suspects that the same is true in other national media.

Because of the undisputed political strength of the United States, it is only natural for other national media to pay a high level of attention to American political affairs. The domination of news stories about the United States in the media of other nations cannot be attributed to American political imperialism; both the First and Third World media may choose to introduce a frequent number of political news stories mentioning the United States to satisfy their domestic information needs.

Thus, the above discussion of the political implications in the international news flow can explain the dominance of stories about the United States in the international news coverage of industrialized nations' media. However, the "imperialism" hypothesis claimed by the proponents of the New World Information Order cannot explain the above dominance. Thus, the

"political and economic" hypothesis is the more powerful explanation of the dominance or the "imbalance" found in this empirical study.

Consequently, the existence of flaws in the "imperialism" oriented New World Information Order hypotheses is evident. It is certain, therefore, that those established hypotheses are not as conclusive, nor as powerful, as their popularity in Third World diplomatic circles might indicate.

In order to determine the causes of various trends found in the global flow of information, additional empirical studies and theoretical analyses are needed. Whether or not future studies on the "flow" will be consistent with the present research results, as additional evidence and interpretations of the flow of information among the regions of the world become available, the validity of the above hypotheses will be further tested.

### Footnotes

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Table 1

Number of International Stories Mentioning Each of the Nations  
on the Sampled Network Programs by Frequency

| Rank | NETWORK       |     |               |     |               |     |                |     |
|------|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|----------------|-----|
|      | JNN<br>Nation | (N) | NHK<br>Nation | (N) | BBC<br>Nation | (N) | ITN<br>Nation  | (N) |
| 1    | Japan         | 85  | Japan         | 91  | U.S.A.        | 91  | U.K.           | 63  |
| 2    | U.S.A.        | 66  | U.S.A.        | 73  | U.K.          | 88  | U.S.A.         | 38  |
| 3    | S. Korea      | 20  | Iran          | 29  | Iran          | 50  | Iran           | 19  |
| 4    | U.S.S.R.      | 17  | U.S.S.R.      | 19  | U.S.S.R.      | 32  | U.S.S.R.       | 15  |
| 5    | Iran          | 17  | S. Korea      | 18  | Poland        | 31  | Poland         | 14  |
| 6    | China         | 12  | France        | 18  | W. Germany    | 21  | Iraq           | 10  |
| 7    | France        | 12  | Iraq          | 17  | S. Africa     | 18  | Italy          | 10  |
| 8    | Iraq          | 9   | China         | 14  | Iraq          | 16  | Ireland        | 8   |
| 9    | P.L.O.        | 9   | Poland        | 13  | France        | 13  | France         | 8   |
| 10   | Poland        | 6   | W. Germany    | 8   | Israel        | 12  | W. Germany     | 7   |
| 11   | Algeria       | 4   | U.K.          | 5   | Italy         | 12  | Japan          | 5   |
| 12   | Canada        | 4   | Thailand      | 4   | Ireland       | 9   | Saudi Arabia   | 5   |
| 13   | Cambodia      | 4   | Italy         | 4   | Japan         | 8   | Switzerland    | 4   |
| 14   | Vietnam       | 4   | Algeria       | 3   | Spain         | 8   | Belgium        | 4   |
| 15   | Italy         | 3   | Belgium       | 3   | Saudi Arabia  | 8   | Algeria        | 3   |
| 16   | Bangladesh    | 2   | Canada        | 3   | Swiss         | 6   | Israel         | 3   |
| 17   | U.K.          | 2   | Cambodia      | 3   | Syria         | 6   | Czechoslovakia | 3   |
| 18   | W. Germany    | 2   | Greece        | 3   | Australia     | 6   | Morocco        | 3   |
| 19   | E. Germany    | 2   | Vatican       | 3   | Afghanistan   | 5   | Spain          | 3   |
| 20   | N. Korea      | 2   | Vietnam       | 3   | Belgium       | 5   | Afghanistan    | 3   |

Table 2

Percentage of International News Stories  
by Story Types and by Nations on JNN News Scope

| NATIONS<br>MENTIONED                   | STORY<br>TYPE | ST | STG  | STV  | DFR  | FFR  | (N)         |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|----|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Developing Nations                     |               | 0  | 13.3 | 38.9 | 12.2 | 35.6 | 100.0 (90)  |
| Developed Nations<br>(Including Japan) |               | 0  | 14.9 | 52.3 | 17.9 | 14.9 | 100.0 (134) |
| USA                                    |               | 0  | 16.7 | 51.5 | 12.1 | 19.7 | 100.0 (66)  |

Table 3

Percentage of International News Stories  
by Story Types and Nations by NHK News Center Nine

| NATIONS<br>MENTIONED                   | STORY<br>TYPE | ST   | STG  | STV  | DFR  | FFR  | (N)         |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Developing Nations                     |               | 18.3 | 18.3 | 12.2 | 16.5 | 34.8 | 100.0 (115) |
| Developed Nations<br>(Including Japan) |               | 11.3 | 20.3 | 14.1 | 21.5 | 29.2 | 100.0 (177) |
| USA                                    |               | 13.7 | 21.9 | 15.1 | 20.5 | 28.8 | 100.0 (73)  |

Table 4  
Percentage of International News Stories  
by Story Types and by Nations on BBC Nine O'Clock News

| NATIONS<br>MENTIONED                | STORY<br>TYPE | ST  | STG  | STV  | DFR  | FFR  | (N)         |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Developing Nations                  |               | 4.0 | 17.3 | 23.8 | 9.9  | 45.0 | 100.0 (202) |
| Developed Nations<br>(Including UK) |               | 3.2 | 24.5 | 21.2 | 16.5 | 34.5 | 100.0 (278) |
| USA                                 |               | 4.4 | 16.5 | 17.6 | 11.0 | 50.5 | 100.0 (91)  |

Table 5  
Percentage of International News Stories  
by Story Types and by Nations on ITN News at Ten

| NATIONS<br>MENTIONED                | STORY<br>TYPE | ST   | STG  | STV  | DFR  | FFR  | (N)         |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| Developing Nations                  |               | 12.8 | 25.6 | 10.3 | 15.4 | 35.7 | 100.0 (78)  |
| Developed Nations<br>(Including UK) |               | 12.3 | 19.1 | 21.6 | 30.3 | 16.7 | 100.0 (162) |
| USA                                 |               | 23.7 | 21.1 | 10.5 | 13.2 | 31.6 | 100.0 (38)  |

Table 6

Percentage of International News Stories  
by Video Use and by Nations Mentioned by JNN, BBC and ITN  
NETWORK

| NATIONS                                      | STYLE | JNN     |      | NHK     |      | BBC     |      | ITN     |      |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
|                                              |       | NON-VTR | VTR  | NON-VTR | VTR  | NON-VTR | VTR  | NON-VTR | VTR  |
| Developing                                   |       | 13.3    | 86.7 | 36.6    | 63.4 | 21.3    | 78.7 | 38.4    | 61.6 |
| Developing<br>(Including UK<br>and/or Japan) |       | 14.9    | 85.1 | 31.6    | 68.4 | 27.7    | 72.3 | 31.4    | 68.6 |
| USA                                          |       | 16.7    | 83.3 | 35.6    | 64.4 | 20.9    | 79.1 | 44.8    | 55.3 |

Table 7  
Percentage of News Stories  
Mentioning the United States by Theme and by Network  
NETWORK

| THEME                     | BBC     |          | NHK     |          |
|---------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
|                           | PERCENT | (NUMBER) | PERCENT | (NUMBER) |
| Political                 | 33.0    | (30)     | 42.5    | (31)     |
| Economic                  | 14.2    | (13)     | 15.0    | (11)     |
| Armed Conflict            | 6.6     | ( 6)     | 5.5     | ( 4)     |
| Crime                     | 23.1    | (21)     | 12.3    | ( 9)     |
| Disaster                  | 4.4     | ( 4)     | 5.5     | ( 4)     |
| Unrest                    | 3.3     | ( 3)     | 0       | ( 0)     |
| Technology and<br>Science | 8.8     | ( 8)     | 5.5     | ( 4)     |
| Environment               | 0       | ( 0)     | 0       | ( 0)     |
| Human Interest            | 6.5     | ( 6)     | 12.3    | ( 9)     |
| Others                    | 0       | ( 0)     | 1.4     | ( 1)     |
| TOTAL                     | 100%    | (91)     | 100%    | (73)     |